



# Durbin calls out Republican hypocrisy on Central American refugees, immigration reform

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ranking Member of the Senate Immigration Subcommittee, today called out Senate Republicans for holding a hearing on the danger posed by the El Salvador-based MS-13 gang while the Trump Administration has blocked a program to provide refuge to children fleeing violence in Central America and is failing to provide local law enforcement with adequate funding to address the threat of gangs.

Durbin questioned Scott Lloyd, Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), about the current status of the Central American Minors Program, which was established at the height of the unaccompanied minor refugee crisis as a safe means for children under threat in the Northern Triangle region to reunite with family in the United States. Lloyd meekly conceded that the children fit a category “very similar” to the legal definition of refugees.

**“So, the policy of the Administration to halt this program to protect these children from MS-13’s criminal activities doesn’t seem consistent with the message that I’m hearing over and over in this hearing, that we care about the victims in the United States and other places,”** said Senator Durbin.

Durbin also pushed back on testimony from Matthew Albence, Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), who claimed law enforcement in Chicago and Cook County, IL, obstruct law enforcement efforts to bring to justice dangerous members of MS-13 and release them into the community.

**“Make no mistake, if MS-13 gang members are engaged in criminal activity, they’re going to be prosecuted...We’re not going to look the other way when it comes to criminal activity by these gangs or other gangs. In fact, we’ve gone to the point of asking the new president, who has tweeted a lot about Chicago, ‘please help us, send us some resources. We are stretched to the limit with what we’re trying to do,’” he said. “So far we haven’t seen it.”**

In February, Durbin, alongside Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), [called](#) on President Trump to stop tweeting and provide a surge in federal resources to assist public safety efforts in Chicago. The following month, Durbin [reiterated that call](#) in a letter asking the president to include in his Fiscal Year 2018 budget robust funding for federal programs addressing the root causes of gun violence in low-income communities. In May, Senator Durbin [wrote](#) Attorney General Jeff Sessions, asking him to support gun violence prevention efforts ahead of the summer months, when shootings typically increase. Even as the Trump Administration continues to attack Chicago’s reputation, Chicago violence prevention efforts have been left waiting for much-needed support from the federal government.

**Video of Durbin’s remarks before the Judiciary Committee are available [here](#).**

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